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The EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICE of THE ACADEMY is at ROLLS HOUSE, BREAMS BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.

Registered as a Newspaper in the United Kingdom, and at the New York Post Office as Second-class Mail Matter. Transmissible to Canada at the Canadian Magazine rate of postage. Subscriptions: Inland 15s.; Foreign 17s. 6d. a year, post-free.

Notes of the Week

Preparing for Big Things

THE *Times* is hardly fair, either to the Army or the Government, when it points grimly to the fact that the position on the Western front has changed little during the winter. So far as it has changed, the advantage is with the Allies. What the *Times* ignores is that this is the first great campaign in which armies have not gone into winter quarters without a thought of advance. The French continue to score important points on the Vosges, and the British have captured an important hill near Ypres. Perhaps the most noteworthy item of authentic war news of the week is Mr. Churchill's emphatic denial that a battle has taken place in the North Sea, or a disaster has occurred in the Dardanelles. Some of the accounts of the fighting at Neuve Chapelle have shown at once the splendid gallantry of the men at the front, and the need, on which Sir John French insists, for munitions and yet more munitions. Mr. Chamberlain sharply criticised the authorities for attempting to run the country "in blinkers." In one respect, Mr. Asquith's Newcastle speech on Tuesday will have done something to remove the blinkers. The demands of the war have exceeded all expectations, and it is only by the devotion of the men in the factories, not less than of the men in the trenches, that adequate supplies can be maintained in the coming critical months. Mr. Asquith's appeal has gone home the more surely because it was the purest patriotic propaganda.

The Dominions and Peace

Immense satisfaction, both at home and in the Dominions, has been given by Mr. Harcourt's announcement that the Colonies are to be consulted when the time comes to discuss peace terms. This is admittedly a momentous departure, but it is a departure which the splendid rally of Greater Britain to the cause of the Empire made absolutely imperative. There has been much misgiving that the Mother Country would not rise to the occasion, but would simply

regard all questions of peace as solely her business. It would have been a mistake greater than any since the American rebellion. The undertaking renders less necessary the assembling of the Imperial Conference which should have taken place next month. Mr. Fisher, the Australian Premier, was keenly in favour of the Conference, but the Imperial Government and the other Dominion Premiers thought the time inopportune, and Mr. Fisher, in a spirit which is of happy augury, acquiesces. "When the King's business will not fit in with our ideas, we drop them." That is an attitude which at least shows a sweet reasonableness not always forthcoming in Inter-Imperial relations.

Diplomacy and Democracy

Lord Cromer has been lending a patient ear to the dreamers who would abolish secret diplomacy. From the past he derives no hope that democracy would provide any surer guarantee of peace than oligarchy or despotism, but the past, as he recognises, is no real guide, because the democracy of the days of Pericles was not that either of Robespierre or, shall we say, of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald? Nor can we argue from one country to another. German diplomacy and British diplomacy are very different alike in method and aims. Lord Cromer knows of very few important diplomatic "secrets" in recent British diplomacy which might not have been divulged. At the same time he reveals the fact that whilst he was skating on thin ice in Egypt, if he had had to consult not Lord Salisbury or Lord Rosebery, but a body of well-intentioned but not necessarily well-informed Parliamentarians, more than one serious crisis with France might have been the result. It is, indeed, only necessary to study Lord Cromer's "Abbas II" to realise to the full how impossible it would have been to steer a safe course if not the captain, but the whole crew, had to be considered.

The Russian Idea

Mr. Stephen Graham gave the members of the Royal Institution on Friday last the advantage of his wonderful knowledge of Russia. He pointed to a not always recognised truth when he said that, although Russia is a composite nation, it is not a nation of mixed gods. Its art, literature, music—indeed, all its intellectual activities—are inextricably connected with the Central Russian race. Other workers in the same fields, such as the Polish writers and artists, do not appeal to the Russian race, only to their own. Even in science the Russian expression differs from the Western. Russia, he said, is a mighty nation by virtue of something within itself, something original and mighty and growing in power and unity. Russian literature is unlike all other literature, notwithstanding the noisy fame which had overtaken it. Its keynote is sympathy with suffering. There is nothing of the Prussian spirit about it. Instead of commandments and orders and regulations, the Russian mind loved individual freedom. Life is not a procession but a ballet—a great mingling of colours and symbols: not evolution, but a phantasmagoria. No man can really explain Russia, but so far as anyone can understand her, Mr. Stephen Graham is the man.

Marriage and the War

AS this war, ghastly if glorious, develops, and casualty lists bring home to the public mind the full realisation of the drain it is making and will make on the best manhood of Great Britain, the question, what will its effect be on the future of the race? forces itself more and more on the minds of those who have a thought for the morrow. The fact that it is a righteous war, and that to have been out of it would have branded Britain with the mark of poltroonery and dishonour, does not in the least dim the consciousness that British peoples must pay the price for perhaps generations to come. Every splendid fellow who falls will mean one mate the fewer for the already preponderant number of women, and that, in its turn, must be reflected in the future birth-rate. It is not necessary to magnify the sacrifice which the womanhood of the race is called upon to make; and it were easy to exaggerate the loss which posterity will suffer. The war may be responsible for developments which will shock the moral ideas ingrained by Mrs. Grundy; it may even intensify that form of social difficulty to which Mr. Ronald McNeill has drawn prominent attention in his efforts to save unmarried girls from any shame in being the mothers of war babies. On the other hand, the war will bring its compensations, compensations both moral and material; but those who survive to reap whatever good may be found as a set-off against the evil will have imposed upon them a duty not less great and imperative than that which every soldier is discharging to-day with cheerful devotion. Something must be done to save the country from the quite obvious consequences of the depletion of its finest manhood.

The problem is one which our spiritual and scientific leaders, not content to confine their thoughts to the mere needs of the hour, however pressing, are already beginning to consider; the Churches and the eugenics propagandists may not look at it from quite the same point of view, but both are giving it earnest attention. At the General Synod of the Church of Ireland last week the Bishop of Down, with equal delicacy and decision, introduced a measure to amend "The Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony" with the special object of combating some of the modern theories and tendencies regarding the number of children, if any, which it is desirable should be born to those who have been joined in wedlock. Whether the modification of the introductory exhortation, which bluntly proclaimed the purpose for which matrimony was ordained, has induced people to ignore that purpose may well be doubted; all we would say is that it is not without significance at this time that eminent divines should urge the necessity of making the exhortation more emphatic, whilst still seeking to avoid offence to certain susceptibilities in the words used. The Church is quite properly concerned—and in view of the wastage involved in the war the importance of the matter cannot be too strongly insisted on—with the limits which have been self-imposed on the dimensions of most

families. The Eugenist is concerned with what he would call the dysgenic possibilities of the future. Professor Arthur Thomson, of Aberdeen, took Eugenics and War for the subject of the second Galton lecture a couple of months ago; his address may be read in full in the April *Eugenic Review*. Professor Thomson, in an admirable essay, warned his hearers that the fact could not be concealed, whatever the advantages in other directions, that "war, biologically regarded, means wastage and a reversal of eugenic or rational selection, since it prunes off a disproportionately large number of those whom the race can least afford to lose." At the same time, he recognises that the war should result in an improvement in "the standard of all-round fitness," and socially should enrich our heritage. Like the Bishop of Down, Professor Thomson is gravely exercised by the falling birth-rate and the attendant national risks. "Among the revaluations after the war," he says, "may we not expect some change of public sentiment in regard to eugenic ideals, some more marked disapproval of selfish forms of celibacy, some more cordial encouragement of those desirable people who marry chivalrously while it is still spring-time with them, without waiting till the bridegroom has secured twice the income his father had? There is patriotism in dying for our country; there is a conceivable patriotism in marrying for her and in bearing children for her."

One risk to be guarded against after the war has not perhaps occurred to many people: it is that of a misdirected economy, in regard not only to progeny, but to money. Professor Thomson pleads with Eugenists, and the plea may well be made more general, to resist the natural desire "to economise in noble luxuries—in pictures and music, books and lectures, theatres and higher education. By all means let our criticism of consumption be intensified, but let it be enlightened. Let us prune our comforts before we pinch our souls. For, apart from ourselves, who may be past praying for, economising on the nobler luxuries means hardship and celibacy to those finer spirits who are the salt of the earth, whose virtue all must wish to see conserved in the natural inheritance of the race." We might even go further: whilst the individual who has the power to spend on "noble luxuries" will patriotically keep his purse-strings loose, the State, often too ready to interfere where it can do no real good, might with advantage to itself and the individual do much to make life easier for the professional classes and for those who would love to have the little ones about the home were the responsibilities which they bring with them not too great for men and women with nothing but their brains and their health as sheet-anchors against an uncertain future. The great middle and professional classes are the chief sufferers by the war, and the ideals of race will best be served by seeing that, after the war, life for them is robbed of burdens which have always been unduly heavy and now threaten to become intolerable.

Old Diaries

BY JOAN D. PARKES

THE most learned history, the most brilliant and profound treatise, will not bring back the past more vividly than the multitudinous printed information to be found in old diaries.

Every emergency is catered for. Do you forget a date, there is a chronology of the world's events, starting with the Creation and ending with Bonaparte's surrender to Captain Maitland on board the *Bellerophon*; are you a stranger to London, there ready in your diary are the fares of watermen and hackney coaches; a faulty mathematician, a ready-reckoning table comes to hand; have you five minutes to spare, you may improve it by learning the names and commanders of all the ships in commission; or should you belong to the fairer sex, divert yourself with "the new song called 'A Tax on Bachelors,' sung with unbounded applause by Mr. Dignum at Vauxhall."

In "The Ladies' Polite Remembrancer for 1816" we have, not the imposing arraignment of facts proper to the business man's diary, but rather literary morceaux for leisurely young ladies. There are verses by my Lord Byron, Miss Mitford, and Walter Scott, Esq., and, so that the fair reader may pass in Society as a genteel, well-educated young lady, she can learn what a real Indian cottage is like, and become thoroughly acquainted with the Wielitska salt mines of Poland.

Curiously enough, the very day I discovered this latter (per description) I came upon a similar account in the current number of the *Queen*, with the modern addition of large photograph reproductions.

In an "Animal Biography" we are given a dire warning against cruelty to animals, as witness the following:—

"A singular circumstance attached to cruelty to a cat has recently occurred in the case of a foot-boy in the neighbourhood of Chelsea, who, being ordered to destroy two cats, which probably through the servant's carelessness had eaten a fowl, the moans of one of them so affected his nerves that he declared he would never kill another cat as long as he lived. Soon after, his countenance changed, and he was unable to stand; his whole mass of blood seemed turned. Next morning, being taken to St. George's Hospital, he expired."

In this same diary we become acquainted with the "Fashionable Country Dances." Infinite variety seems to have been as much a feature of the ballroom a hundred years ago as uniformity is to-day, with our sorely tried tangoes and two-steps—at least, if variety in names is proof.

How bizarre they are may be seen from the following selection:—"The Grasshopper," "Diamond Cut Diamond," "The Duke of Sussex's Favourite," "Claret," "Drops of Whiskey," "Past Ten O'clock," "The Duke of Wellington's Waltz," "A Trip to Flanders."

This last is topical in the extreme, but I can scarcely recommend it as a good method of overcoming the

all-enveloping mud of Flemish winter days. Reading the figures, one begins to suspect that variety ended with the names. There is much leading of the first lady with the second gentleman, swinging corners (this, I believe, is still a feature in certain motor-trips to Flanders) and joining of hands; a colourless repetition only livened when one comes to such figures as the "Allemande" and the "Pousette," alluring names of mystery conjuring memories of the Waterloo Ball, when Becky Sharp triumphed so mercilessly over poor Amelia, together with a sudden recollection of the white "Paduasoy" about which the little bride of the Reverend Dr. Jenkins wrote so many longing letters. The connection seems strange. Perhaps it is that "Pousette" and "Paduasoy" are like words of fleeting and long-forgotten fashions.

Further on we find a list of holidays observed at the public offices, and pretty numerous they are. But not all were kept at the Customs and East India House. Shrove Tuesday, Easter Wednesday, Whit-Wednesday and many another fine summer day when all the London world was enjoying itself on Hampstead Heath or showing its fine feathers at Vauxhall, poor Charles Lamb was on his high stool at the India House, busy at his "real" works.

How slow and restful must have been those bygone days! No racketing to and from the City, morning and night, on an unwieldy juggernaut, threepence each way; no shooting through a tube in the bowels of the earth. The City shopkeeper, living at Chelsea or Chiswick, had perforce to do the six or eight miles daily afoot, unless he were in such a flourishing way of business as to take a hackney coach and spend near upon half-a-sovereign for the double journey. How delightful after a long day spent in a narrow room overlooking an airless City court to take a boat homeward on a balmy summer evening! But, again, it was not for the City clerk or struggling shopkeeper. The four and sixpence to Chelsea and five shillings to Chiswick would have quickly dissipated any modest hundred pounds a year.

The year 1820 saw the introduction of cabriolets, and in a diary of 1829 we read: "Cabriolets are carriages with two wheels drawn by one horse, carrying two persons beside the driver." That this differed from the now derelict hansom is seen in old drawings, showing the driver seated beside his passengers, a folding hood covering them. The fares at this time were two-thirds of those of the hackney coaches. Of the novelty of the year, an omnibus running from Paddington to the City, there is no mention. Both hackney-coach drivers and watermen were bound by strict rules. The latter, however, seem from all accounts to have been a restive set, always ready to stand out for their rights, which were safeguarded by a powerful company. But though they opposed each and every new method of transit which infringed on their livelihood, it was in vain. The river steamer, the railway, the 'buses, came to stay. The watermen's employment dwindled, and with it their importance.

Fares underwent little change between the years 1816

and 1829; only in the latter year there was a slight increase for long-distance fares. From Chelsea Bridge westward and from Greenwich eastward the fare was threepence per half-mile for scullers, oars being double the price. "For the information of the public," we read, "piles marking the distance have been placed in the river."

We chafe in these war-times at the occasional delay of foreign mails. A diary of the year 1836 shows us the state of affairs when Government brigs still carried mails to America. These mails were made up on the first Wednesday monthly, and thirteen weeks were calculated for the despatch and return of the packets. What a long and weary wait for a "reply by return." There were mails to France every day, and to the northern countries of Europe twice a week. In one respect only were our ancestors more fortunate than we of 1915. Four days a week they could write to Ostend and three to Germany with the assurance of relations and friends receiving their letters.

In this diary, a man's diary, with none of your fashionable dances or my Lord Byron's verses, we enter into the intricacies of the window tax—that monstrous impost which put a premium upon light and air, too little thought of at the best, and the cause of those sham windows in the symmetrical façades of old houses. Windows of inns, shops, workshops, factories, and warehouses were exempted from payment, as were dairies and cheese-rooms "if made with splints, laths, or wires, without any glass, and the word 'Dairy or Cheese-room' is painted over the door, or one glazed window in a dairy or cheese-room in a farmhouse occupied by a tenant, if never used to sleep in, but wholly kept for that purpose." The small tenant farmer also had light and air free of duty, but other dwellers in this civilised community were mulcted at the rate of 16s. 6d. for a minimum of eight windows. Dwellers in stately mansions having 180 windows were answerable for a sum of £46 11s. 3d. Carriages, stage-coaches, horses, waiters, and male servants were other means of raising revenue. Of the bachelor lording it with a Jeames or a Thomas an extra pound was exacted, an exception being accorded to celibate Roman Catholic priests. Similarly, poor Protestant and Dissenting clergy were allowed the concession of a riding-horse free of duty, a favour also extended to farmers, shepherds, and licensed postmasters.

Further on we come to a full-page list of ships in commission, ninety-five stout wooden sailing vessels—steam navigation did not make its debut in the Navy till two years later. Here we see the name of the grand old *Victory*, then, as now, flagship; and also remark a *Canopus*, a precursor of the sixteen-year-old veteran of the battle of the Falklands.

The present revival of interest in Russia has caused an increased demand for Mr. Stephen Graham's works. Mr. Lane will issue next week a cheaper edition of "*A Vagabond in the Caucasus*."

On Perfection

THE men to whom perfection appeals are comparatively rare. The very word seems cold and lifeless. It savours of the pedantry of erudition or of the austerity of an outlook to which few can ever hope to aspire. It is remote, non-human. More than that, to most of us it is undesirable: and, undesirable or not, it is quite certain that we are very far from its attainment.

The people with whom we are most in sympathy in fiction, in history, or in real life are they who are fallible, and whose most endearing qualities are often their imperfections. So in periods of history, of literature, or art, those dearest to us are usually the times of striving, of aspiration; not the rare instances in which for a moment the genius of a nation or of an individual seems to have reached its most complete attainment. The old-fashioned idea of a future state in which—struggles and aspirations over—mankind seated itself complacently on golden floors, singing eternally the praises of perfection, is to us a lost ideal; more easily can we understand the scale of Dante's ascending heavens, in which the soul reached from height to height, finding in each a new and hitherto undreamed-of ecstasy. The best in us ever aspires and in our loftiest dreams we seek for fresh heights to climb, the power to conquer new realms of knowledge, for ever-widening visions of beauty; the conception of completely knowing, entirely realising, is as the compression of eternal wisdom into the limit of the span of a mortal life. It is unthinkable.

To extreme youth alone is the idea of perfection possible. Then black is black, and white as the driven snow; it is only the experience of maturity which reveals the thousand complex tints, the myriad changing values and influences that go to make up what to them is crude colour—clearly defined good or unmitigated evil.

Nevertheless, the counsel of perfection is a good one, for the wise men are in all ages they who follow a star; remote it may be and uncertain its leading, but many of its followers have found themselves taking part in the birth of a miracle. It was that impulse which led to the search which is enshrined in the legend of the Holy Grail—men of blood and passion and tyranny seeking for an unquenchable Ideal whose light illuminated the possibilities which lay within them. The thought of perfection in those Middle Ages was much like a phantom light, a will-o'-the-wisp whose following led men away from the world into solitary places as hermits, into religious communities, on pilgrimages, into the mortification of the natural life, that the life they deemed higher might be perfected. Always the limitation of humanity showed itself in its incapacity to apprehend true perfection—of body, soul, and spirit. Always one part of human nature has suffered for the emancipation of the opposing side.

There is one period towards which men look now with awe in their hearts, with admiration in their eyes,

that time in Greece which seems wellnigh perfect in its attainment, in letters, in art, in government and ideals; yet this very people put to death their greatest philosopher because he dared to tell them of a perfection to which their minds were not attuned. Centuries later the Jewish nation, who forever pulled away its skirts from the contamination of less favoured peoples, who regarded itself as the chosen and perfect race, crucified the one who exposed the hollowness of that claim and preached the true perfection of the Spirit.

Through all the ages the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other—from asceticism to a liberty bordering on license, from a perfection that counts the body nothing to a "Kultur" that would eliminate spiritual influences for the good of the state politic, the body corporate; but slowly, as ever the work of evolution proceeds, there is arising an ideal among the nations which shall give equal homage to the life visible and invisible, to mind and matter, to the material and spiritual.

The whole trend of science is to a wider apprehension of perfection—the material is taking on a spiritual significance, the social ideal, in its turn, broadening to meet it; more and more it is recognised that the perfect man has needs beyond ideals with which to sustain his greatness: added unto them there must be knowledge and comfort, the possibility of beauty and of a well-ordered life. It is realised that perfection, far from being austere, inhuman, remote, is warm and living, is the highest and most natural expansion of all the powers and visions, the desires and capacities of enlightened humanity. Misapprehension, want of understanding, alone hinders its attainment. No temporal cause can stand in its way. There are people who have seen in this war a set-back to the principles of perfection such as will take the progress of generations to make good. Peace has been held to be one of its loftiest prerogatives. But there is an anger as righteous as mercy, a justice as stern as compassion is beautiful, and it is possible for the two to be united. Previous to this world-conflict the pendulum had swung towards an easy-going charity that was full of danger. "Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner" had taken away the embarrassing necessity for judgment, to forgive was more noble than to punish. It was a time of compromise. War has changed all this. Once more good and evil stand out in clear definition. The bugle-call has sounded, the nation and the individual has been constrained to take sides, to show its colours, to stand to its principle of perfection. May we hope that it is really one step nearer to the ultimate goal of humanity, however dark the prospect at the moment? When the smoke of battle has cleared away, when the mists of death and pain that are in men's eyes have lifted, and the sun of peace shines out once more, it will be found that many things have taken to themselves a new perspective, that what was dark has become illumined, what was complex plain to be understood; that perfection lies not in creeds, not in knowledge, not in beauty nor in understanding, but in the

true apprehension of the brotherhood and unity of man, in the nations working side by side towards a goal which shall include the fullest life possible to the individual, with the highest national ideal.

The Music of Granville Bantock

AT the present time much is being written about the native composer, and if the condition of Europe cause us to examine the works of English composers we may find much to admire. Among the writers whose names are well known, that of Granville Bantock is prominent. This prominence is due to the personality of the musician. He has in plenty all those qualities which are necessary for a good composer. But his chief characteristic is his imagination, and it is the imaginative touches in his scores which distinguish him from the English writers of half a century ago. We have left the old oratorio tradition behind. It is true that Bantock has written sacred works, like "Christ in the Wilderness" and "Gethsemane." But one is conscious of moving about in a new and beautiful world when one turns over the pages of his music. He has a natural bias towards subjects which give opportunities for a liberal use of colour. More than half-Oriental in his leanings, he has looked fondly towards the East and won something of its mystery. In the "Sappho" prelude, in the overture to a Greek tragedy, "Oedipus at Colonus," in "Russian Scenes," in "Omar Khayyam," in "The Songs of the East" and "The Ghazels of Hafiz" he revels in the possibilities of his theme.

Those who imagine that Bantock stands only for such delightful things as "The Jester Songs" are mistaken. It is the greater Bantock who is making history. Notwithstanding the fact that Liszt shook the musical world to its foundation by writing his symphonic poems, England was strangely unaffected by the movement. A generation which was enslaved by the Mendelssohn tradition was not likely to look with approval upon the new works. Bantock is most interesting when he is most modern. The great strides which musical composition has made in this country are evident in the best pieces of Elgar, Bantock, Cyril Scott and Holbrooke. The symphonic poem brought the composer into direct contact with the world of art and letters. The interests of Bantock are plainly seen in the subjects which he has chosen to illustrate. We have "Dante and Beatrice," "The Witch of Atlas," and "Fifine at the Fair," all works of exceptional interest and unusual beauties. Bantock's technique is astounding. The intricacies of the modern orchestra are handled with consummate ease. He has great fluency, and his melodic gift is rich. But he never allows his knowledge to master him, and when comparative simplicity will serve his ends he does not hesitate to adopt it.

This pre-eminence has not been acquired by turning his back upon other phases of musical development. The great pride of England is in her choirs. No one

knows this better than Bantock. In the catalogue of his works we find a very large number of original part songs and of arrangements of popular songs. While recognising the immense encouragement which this interest in choral singing is bound to give, I always experience a feeling of regret that one capable of writing fine and elaborate orchestral poems should devote so much of his time to composing short vocal works. Bantock has, indeed, all the qualifications for a dramatic composer, and many must be looking forward to the day when he will be persuaded to write the opera which will be more of a landmark in English music than Sullivan's "Ivanhoe" was.

Among our modern English writers he stands alone. There is nothing in him which reminds us of the more sombre Elgar, and he is more consistently interesting than his older colleagues. When his music is yet better known it will not be surprising if he exercises a profound influence upon younger men. For here we find knowledge freed from pedantry, and a fine liberty stalks across his pages. He has drawn upon some of the best of our poets. Blake and Shelley, Meredith and Scott, Browning and Burns have, in turn, inspired his muse. I have never heard a page of Bantock that did not contain something striking and original. Fertile as he is, the music does not smell of the lamp. Only those who have delved into the heap of "made" music can realise the value of such a man in England at the present time. We have reached a critical period in our musical history. The past, with its polished speech learnt at Leipzig, with its oratorios written in the style which was bequeathed by Handel and Mendelssohn, is fading into oblivion, and we seek new voices. Among them, that of Bantock is one of the sweetest and most eloquent. With him we visit the blossoming isles of the South or dream away the day in some enchanting garden. And we rejoice that we have found a man who can be melodious without being superficial. Judging by what he has already accomplished, we are amply justified in expecting many works which will do much to add to the joy of the genuine music-lover.

D. C. PARKER.

REVIEWS

Philosopher and Mystic

Three Little Dramas. By MAURICE MAETERLINCK.
New Edition. (Duckworth & Co. 2s. net.)

THE degree of success attained by a philosopher is not to be judged by any rough-and-ready measure. Delicacy has its moments of inspiration as well as full and flowing periods, and the loquacious interpreter of mysteries, who has a name for everything under the sun, cannot always meet the still gaze of the quiet visionary to whom life is an ever-changing problem. If adventures are in the soul, as R. L. Stevenson knew, as M. Maeterlinck believes, and as most thinking men

prove for themselves, few of us are in a position to explain anything but the barest outlines of the complexities amid which we move; words spoken casually conceal intense forces, unutterable things, and we need to be on guard lest by a careless mood we miss some clue that was destined to alter the course of our seeking, or we shatter some dream-lamp whose pale light was guiding a wanderer into a restful haven. Such thoughts have come to us often with the reading of "The Treasure of the Humble" or "Wisdom and Destiny," the fruits of an observant, gentle, yet insatiable mind. "No sooner are the lips still," we read, "than the soul awakes and sets forth on its labours; for silence is an element that is full of surprise, danger, and happiness, and in these the soul possesses itself in freedom." There is something in this beyond a pretty idea, and in M. Gerard Harry's study of his friend's career we find a sentence which throws much light upon Maeterlinck's point of view: "Il dit que le plus illettré des paysans d'aujourd'hui peut subir, sans le savoir, l'influence des plus anciens et des plus doctes penseurs et penser comme eux, l'air spirituel que nous respirons tous étant fait de toutes les haleines de l'esprit humain, depuis les premiers de ses soupirs." Little wonder, with such a belief in a kind of confused heredity, that the emphasis in Maeterlinck's work should so often be laid upon "the invisible signal of the soul that salutes its fellow."

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such a writer will hardly bring to perfection a drama intended for actual performance on the stage. His conceptions move so softly, in so hushed an atmosphere, so dim and mysterious a light; they speak in suggestions, in undertones, occasionally, if we may be irreverent, even in rows of dots which may mean much or little; and their symbolic significance is apt to be lost when dealt with by real lights and shadows and mechanical aids, forced to confront the stare of an audience. Is it not possible, too, we wonder, to stretch the thin web of delicacy and reticence to breaking-point? There is beauty in the first of these three little plays, "Alladine and Palomides," but we cannot read into it the meanings which many admirers find; the death of Alladine's pet lamb has no "symbolic" suggestion for us. That the shadowy drama is full of poetic imagery is obvious, but that it is in any way profound, save to the devotee, we can hardly profess to believe; and though "The Death of Tintagiles" is a beautiful study of sisterly love, there is no need to take it as subtly mystic or especially impressive. The "Interior," the third play in this book, is one that really raises a tide of emotion in the reader; it might easily move an audience strongly in the hands of sympathetic actors. The "plot" is a mere nothing. From a garden, an Old Man and a Stranger see a family assembled in the house, the windows opening on the garden being unshuttered, the room illumined. A daughter of the house is drowned; the body is even then being brought from the village, and the question is, who shall break the news to the unsuspecting, happy party? The conversation between the two goes on, in undertones:

The Stranger : See, they are smiling in the silence of the room.

The Old Man : They are not at all anxious—they did not expect her this evening.

The Stranger : They sit motionless and smiling. But see, the father puts his fingers to his lips. . .

The Old Man : He points to the child asleep on its mother's breast. . .

The Stranger : She dares not raise her head for fear of disturbing it. . .

The Old Man : They are not sewing any more. There is a dead silence. . .

The Stranger : They have let fall their skein of white silk. . .

The Old Man : They are looking at the child. . .

The Stranger : They do not know that others are looking at them. . .

The Old Man : We, too, are watched. . .

The Stranger : They have raised their eyes. . .

The Old Man : And yet they can see nothing. . .

The Stranger : They seem to be happy, and yet there is something—I cannot tell what. . .

The Old Man : They think themselves beyond the reach of danger. They have closed the doors, and the windows are barred with iron. They have strengthened the walls of the old house; they have shot the bolts of the three oaken doors. They have foreseen everything that can be foreseen. . .

The Stranger : Sooner or later we must tell them. . .

So the thrilling situation rises quietly to its climax, and the reader suffers a sense of infinite pity for the happy folk in the lamp-lit, cosy home, whose sorrow is even then close upon them. In this drama Maeterlinck's art is at its best, even though of action there may be but the slightest; it is an "adventure of the soul," poignant and pitiful. The others are to be read in the study for their beauty of prose, their mystery and colour and elusive hints at an inner meaning, but "The Interior" touches sharply the springs of sympathy and gains immensely in value because the characters are not vague personages in whom we can feel little interest, but real human beings in trouble. For once the philosopher has taken a grip of earth; we only wish he had done so more frequently, for his fame would then have been even greater, and he would have charmed many who remain unmoved by shadows, however beautifully and poetically they may talk.

The War Lord of France

Life of General Joffre. By ALEXANDER KAHN.
(London : Heinemann. 1s. net.)

MR. KAHN may be congratulated on having unearthed enough material to give us something like a connected account of the cooper's son of Rivesaltes who is to-day the Generalissime of the French Army and the man on whose decisions the fate not merely of France but of the world turns. The rise of General Joffre is one of the events which will be held to justify democracy. France's greatest soldier began life in the very humblest way, and secured preferment by sheer merit shown alike on the battlefield and in the office. There are no stories available of General Joffre's young days

which can be held to prove that someone or other, as is usually the case, foresaw that he was destined to greatness. Nor has there ever been anything about the man himself to suggest that he was ambitious; he is as far removed from the prancing Boulanger as the Poles from the Equator. He was selected for the office of War Lord of the Republic on the recommendation of General Pau, who was himself offered the post and with self-denial and patriotic insight preferred to stand aside in order that the rare qualities of General Joffre should be given full opportunity. He was almost entirely unknown at the time of his appointment, and the public asked, "Who is Joffre?" He was practically forgotten again by the man-in-the-street, and when the crisis came in August last tens of thousands in France and outside were still asking, "Who is Joffre?"

Twenty years earlier, in the French expedition to Timbuktu, he had performed a feat which, if he had been disposed to self-advertisement, might have made his name ring throughout France, and be for ever remembered. In the critical situation which followed the surprise, defeat, and death of General Bonnier, the command of the little French force fell to him, and with a mere remnant of the strength available to his unfortunate chief Joffre, instead of turning back, went straight ahead and took Timbuktu. Taciturnity is regarded as his salient characteristic, but the word carries with it associations which do not correctly describe the General's disinclination to talk. He is a student, a worker, and a thinker; he does not talk victories, but wins them, and when he has a remark to make it is something simple, direct and full of meaning, such as the now famous "nibbling at them" touch. "By his simplicity, by his modesty, he recalls to mind the great chieftains of Rome, at a time when the Republic was at the apogee of virile splendour," was one estimate of him. A sergeant who had served under "the man who never spoke"—an absurd exaggeration of his unreadiness to indulge the pernicious habit in these days alike of emperors and tub-thumpers—said, on learning that General Joffre was to be Commander-in-Chief of the French Army: "When Joffre is in command, there is no need to worry. Success is assured. That man Joffre is a veritable wolf-trap for the enemy."

The kindest of men, he has not an atom of weakness in his composition. Nepotism and favouritism have no hope where he is supreme. "Many," says Mr. Kahn, "are the heads that fell into the official basket under the blow of Joffre's axe," though their possessors were personal friends or shared his political beliefs. "Tenacity of purpose; daring when audacity seems to be a necessity; defiant because certain of himself and his men, and withal almost timid. This is General Joffre. . . . He is surrounded by men of great ability; and he has never been guilty of an endeavour to overshadow them, and, if he does overshadow them nevertheless, it is only because he is *the great man*." The thought that most strongly impresses itself upon the reader of this very interesting little study is that it was fortunate for Germany when she struck that

General Joffre had not had time to complete his organisation of the French Army for the very trial it now has to face. He foresaw the character of the next great war as he has foreseen much else. When an ex-deputy three or four years ago was told by a German in Dresden that France had neither discipline nor generals, he answered: "As a matter of fact, of all our French generals I know only one, but I know him well. That is Commander-in-Chief General Joffre. I advise you not to meddle with him." Germany may well wish to-day she had taken the advice. It is quite conceivable that she meddled with General Joffre, because she sized the man up and did not intend to wait until he had taken a leaf out of her book in the interests of France and made the French Army as ready for war as was that of Germany itself.

Russia—the Example

Russian Realities: Being Impressions Gathered During Some Recent Journeys in Russia. By JOHN HUBBACK. Illustrated. (John Lane. 5s. net.)

Now that the thoughts and attention of so many English people are directed towards their Eastern ally, there is a danger that the inadequately informed writer or the one with a certain ability to romance and very little knowledge will rush into print to satisfy the increasing demand for further particulars of this gigantic country, in the past often unkindly and unjustly spoken of as barbarous. Mr. Stephen Graham has probably done as much as, if not more than, any author to give a clear, precise, and true picture of the Russian as he actually exists in his village—his kindness, his courtesy, his hospitality, and his deeply rooted religious faith. Other writers are now entering the field, and, although some will doubtless fall under the heading of the careless ones referred to, while others have still to win laurels equal to those of Mr. Graham, their books yet manage to impart a very good idea of things Russian and of the characteristics of the people.

Such a book is Mr. John Hubback's "Russian Realities." Dealing with parts of South Russia, the author records his experiences in various towns and villages on or near the banks of the Volga and in the Crimea. Consisting only of 270 pages, there is not space enough to go into great details, but the reader will gather a trustworthy impression of these districts, and of the lives of people in provinces not far removed from the graveyard containing the burial-places of English soldiers who fell sixty years ago.

It is not a little astonishing that the people of a country whose Baltic provinces border those of Germany and many other districts which have been so greatly under the influence of the Teuton should yet have maintained an individuality so distinct, characteristics so greatly in contrast with those of the Kaiser's subjects. It says much for the strength and tenacity of a race that, while submitting to business domination and drawing its monetary resources in the shape of wages from large German business houses, it should

yet remain distinct and not be absorbed in the power wielding the authority to say Come or Go. Yet contrast Mr. Hubback's descriptions with the exactness, the uniformity, the order of the average German:—

The disrepair noticeable as to doors and fences seems to be an attribute of the Russian, and even when a general straightening-up takes place it is apt to stop short of completeness. An imposing new stone wall may stand for months without the posts necessary for the large iron gate already visible on the premises. . . . So few people trouble themselves about fixed times for anything.

Of the art of Russia Mr. Hubback has not a very good opinion, while of the great delight of her people in music and dancing he says not a word, although it is common knowledge in England how far advanced her pupils are in song and ballet, while, according to Mr. Maurice Baring, "The singing of the Church choirs in Russia is, without comparison, the finest in the world. . . . The best choirs sing together like one voice."

In speaking of what is usually termed the backwardness of the peasant class, the author just touches upon what will probably account for a great deal of the primitive state of the moujiks, when further research is made into the annals of our ally—the great Tartar invasion of the thirteenth century. During these early times Russia was constantly holding in check a power which, but for her intervention, might have entirely overrun Western Europe; so that, instead of being blamed for being backward in her own civilisation—if to be natural, kind, and reverent is a backward state—she should be extolled for her outpost service, which efficiently held back the Tartars and allowed the countries to the west of her borders to develop in their own way.

The illustrations are good, and the map at the end of the book is very useful.

The Latest Tacitus

The Histories of Tacitus. An English Translation by GEORGE GILBERT RAMSAY. (Murray. 15s. net.)

IN the teeth of the very considerable difficulties presented by Tacitean Latin, Professor Ramsay has succeeded in giving us a really English translation of the histories without falling into any of the slang or modernisms which others have allowed to pass. The *Histories*, of interest to the student at all times, are peculiarly interesting at this moment when ideas of Empire and democracy are so much in the air, and Europe is at war. As Professor Ramsay says in an admirable introduction: "The year A.D. 69 was a year full of tragic and thrilling events, affecting every portion of the Empire; it was a year of four Emperors; a year which devastated Italy and inflicted untold calamity on the Roman people. It was a year big with the future destinies of Rome; seldom has history seen determined in so short a time issues so momentous for the future peace and happiness of mankind." The histories lose nothing in interest from pages which seem to bear directly on modern instances, and suggest again

that there is nothing new but the forgotten. We take the speech of Suetonius Paulinus advising delay which he thought would weaken the Vitellians, whilst of the Othonians he said: "They had wealth, public and private; they had untold money—a weapon more powerful than the sword in civil war." The mind goes at once to Mr. Lloyd George's "silver bullets." Or we take the reflections of Tacitus on love of power and we realise how eternal are the motive-springs of men clothed in brief authority: "Love of power is an ancient, and indeed inborn, passion of the human mind; it broke forth in full development with the greatness of our Empire. In our humble days equality was easily maintained; but when the whole world had been subdued, and the destruction of rival kings and cities opened up to men's desires the secure possession of wealth, then first blazed forth the contests between Patricians and Plebeians. At one time Tribunes were turbulent, at another Consuls overbearing; there were foretastes of civil war in the city and in the Forum. Then Gaius Marius, from the lowest of the plebs, and Lucius Sulla, most pitiless of nobles, vanquished liberty by force of arms and established tyranny in her place. After them came Pompey, a more masked, but not a better, master; and thereafter no prize was fought for but that of Empire. Legions composed of Roman citizens did not lay down their arms at Pharsalia and Philippi: much less would the armies of Otho and Vitellius have abandoned war of their own free will. The same divine wrath, the same human frenzy, the same criminal aims were driving them on to strife; and that these wars were ended as it were at a single stroke was due to the incapacity of the leaders." Professor Ramsay's Tacitus will be valued long after war has given place to peace, but we have gone through the volume now with the keener zest for the appositeness of so much in it, rendered as it is in English equally scholarly and simple. Such a passage as that just quoted might form the text for many reflections on the wars not only of Empires, but of classes.

Fiction

MR. COSMO HAMILTON set himself a difficult task when he sought to evolve a fairy tale out of what has come to be known as the "eternal triangle," and he handicapped himself still further when he named the result "The Miracle of Love" (Hurst and Blackett, 6s.); for of miracle there is none, and the suggested fairies are no more than the usual humans with the bump of benevolence fully developed. But the title chosen is an alluring one, and, after all, though the miracle be lacking, there is plenty of love as *pièce de résistance*, with other meats and a variety of flavourings sufficient to make the dish pleasant—occasionally, perhaps, unpleasant—to the taste of the epicure in fiction. An admirable sub-title would have been "A Study in Dukes and Duchesses," for the author boldly lays a trio of each under contribution, though, to be

strictly accurate, one of the ladies figures in a dual ducal capacity, and she is the heroine in distress for whom the missing miracle could have done no more than was achieved by quite everyday means. She is the grey-eyed, tawny-haired Helena, daughter of a reprobate father who has practically sold her to a debauchee friend, the Duke of Harwich. He takes her to Paris for the honeymoon, but "Helena went away a girl, and by the grace of God came back a girl"; fortunately for her, her depraved husband was seized with paralysis which ended in death. Delicately, but quite plainly, the author describes the relations existing between the ill-assorted couple, the pure-minded, healthy English girl, and the Duke, broken in health, cursed with a taint of Orientalism in his blood. He was a degenerate throwback, and before the end of the honeymoon would willingly have taken "the greatly reduced summer-sales price of thirty shillings" for the wife for whom he had paid thirty thousand pounds. Soon after the marriage Helena encounters her affinity, Lord Clive Hurbert, who ultimately becomes Duke of Cheshire, at the Lord Warden Hotel, Dover. It is a case of love at first sight, but though the rules and regulations of the upper ten are most delightfully ignored, the young couple otherwise preserve a healthy respect for Mrs. Grundy. Their struggle to keep straight on the line of duty forms the theme of the story, and virtue is duly rewarded at its close, thanks not to fairies, but to a dear, middle-aged couple whom Dickens might have created. Other characters hover more or less round these patient lovers, and in their way are every one entertaining, especially the Lady Emily Hurbert, Clive's aunt, whom the reader is sure to love. Mr. Cosmo Hamilton's views on affairs in general, with the exception of the war, but including the "militants," form an interesting additional feature of the book, which should command a large circle of readers.

To write a novel with the hero's career starting at his babyhood, continuing through his school-days and ending as he approaches maturity, is not a particularly easy task. Mr. Eric Leadbitter, however, has accomplished it remarkably well in "Rain Before Seven" (George Allen and Unwin, 6s.), and in reading of Michael Lawson one feels that the author has taken infinite pains to present this character. Not that the story bears any indication that the delineation was a laborious task, but there are marks proving that no pains were spared, no trouble was too great to give to Michael the full measure of which the author deemed him worthy. Possessing a certain talent for music, and showing no particular ability for anything else, the young hero, on being expelled from school for a foolish rather than a wicked offence, finds a kind friend who finances him while he studies the art to which he has given his devotion. Being of a retiring disposition, the boy makes few friends, and even in time ceases to correspond with his own family as well as with his patron. Eventually thrown on his own resources, he manages, by abandoning all luxuries,

just to make a living—for a time. This part of the story is perhaps a little too much drawn out, and does not hold the reader's attention in the same way as do the first and last parts of the book. The whole account of the boy, however, is good; his various love affairs are consistent with his vacillating disposition; and if Mr. Leadbitter gives the reader the impression that he is viewing characters from a considerable distance, instead of being put on intimate terms with the persons of the story, the book on that account, thanks to the author's careful handling, does not lose its grip.

In "Tainted Gold" (Stanley Paul, 6s.), Mr. H. Noel Williams carries the reader with him at breakneck speed to a prolonged feast of the most extraordinary horrors and mysteries it is possible to cram into any six-shilling novel. There are corpses galore; the dead come to life again; there is a detective, and the tainted gold which everyone is after. Young Gerald Carthew is the unconscious heir to it, and in consequence his life, and the lives of not a few of his friends, are constantly in jeopardy. Those in search of thrills will find enough and to spare in Mr. Noel Williams' vivacious story, which never flags for a moment.

The Theatre

"The Panorama of Youth"

HERE would really sometimes seem to be a conspiracy of critics to belittle a play. At least, there is often a much nearer approach to unanimity among the gentlemen who "do" the theatres for the daily papers than among those who comment on books or pictures. The critics are generally agreed that Mr. Hartley Manners' "Comedy of Age" at the St. James's is a sort of brackish Pinero and water. It reminds them of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," and they contrast it to the detriment of Mr. Hartley Manners. Sir George Alexander, we are told, does his best with it, etc., etc.

We see no real reason to endorse this view of the play. The resemblance in plot and purpose is undoubtedly, and Mr. Manners, we need not deny, is not Sir Arthur Pinero. But he has produced a very good, workmanlike comedy, with some perfectly delightful touches which appeal alternately to our sense of humour and our sentiment. Sir George Alexander as the elderly Sir Richard Gauntlett, who dyes his hair, wears stays, and assumes the airs of a young man because he is again in love, shows once more what a master he is; when at the end his hair assumes its rightful colour and he is obviously the elderly gentleman, he is hardly more natural than in the earlier scenes. It is just a wonderful impersonation. The play turns on the loves of Sir Richard Gauntlett for Mrs. Gordon-Trent (who has been divorced in unusual circumstances), and of Felicia Gauntlett, his daughter, for Geoffrey Annandale, Mrs. Gordon-Trent's son. If the plot is machine-

made, as we are told by the critics, the machinery is of a very high order, and the company uses it to the best advantage. Miss Nina Boucicault, Miss Madge Titheradge, Mr. Owen Nares, Mr. Alfred Bishop, and Mr. Nigel Playfair get every ounce of good there is to be got out of their parts. The play strikes home for one reason if for no other. It has heart as well as brain. If it is not great work, it is intensely human and interesting, and it is magnificently acted.

"Oliver Twist"

IN times of peril the heart of the playgoer appears to turn to thoughts of Charles Dickens and melodrama. The revival of "Oliver Twist" by Mr. Comyns Carr, with Sir Herbert Tree's wonderful Fagin and the famous Bill Sikes of Mr. Lyn Harding, should satisfy this longing.

Never were villains so extremely wicked; never were good people so truly admirable; never, surely, has the pseudo-sentiment of the early Victorian period been so boldly set forth. We own to a great advantage over most of the audience on the 19th in that we had not seen the play before, nor read the novel since we were fourteen—now some years ago. This freshness of outlook left us particularly susceptible to the curiously old-fashioned manner of the play and to the vivid quality of the acting. Sir Herbert takes to himself the nature of the Cockney, cruel-hearted, almost impossible criminal with thorough artistry. He is not, perhaps, allowed to be much like a human being, but he certainly gives us his very last word of work and skill. Fagin may not be the kind of unpleasant trainer of thieves whom we can believe in, but, as Sir Herbert presents him, he is undoubtedly the Jew that Cruikshank drew—and the one which that artist eventually believed he had created.

In the world of stage-melodrama Miss Constance Collier's Nancy, Mr. Harding's Bill, Mr. Stanmore's Dodger, and Mr. Roy Byford's Bumble remain splendid companion-pictures for the remarkable Fagin. They are beyond praise in that particular world of art upon which they enter with such spirited intention. Miss Alma Murray is content to give us a charming old, almost Regency, lady—Miss Murray whom we remember so well as the vivid heroine of Browning's "Colombe's Birthday." That is a sad thing about Dickens—he inclines to reminiscences. There are many other excellent performances in the cast of twenty-two; we do not feel that Miss Mavis Yorke, who was so lively in "Where the Rainbow Ends," is very happy as Oliver, but Miss Jessie Winter is the most delightful Rose Maylie imaginable, and bears the whole weight of her artificial part with grace and beauty.

In art the older vogue is always the most widely popular—for perfectly sound sociological reasons—and therefore we have no doubt that "Oliver Twist" will fill His Majesty's to the brim for its present weeks of revival.

CORRESPONDENCE

MISTRAL.

To the Editor of THE ACADEMY.

Sir,—Too often is it true that the globe-trotter goes everywhere, sees everything, and observes nothing. And seldom is the man with something to say as ready with words as he who has nothing. Imagine my pleasure, then, to meet one who had seen Frédéric Mistral, who felt and could describe the charm of Provence. It was a chance meeting in one of those Soho restaurants to which Englishmen go in search of French dishes; vain quest, for the Channel has a *raison d'être*, and a French dish on our side is rarely equal to a dish of the same name on the other.

An admirer of Frédéric Mistral, the mention of Provence at once brought his name to my lips; whereupon the globe-trotter absent-mindedly achieved a *gaffe* second only to the immortal "What are keats?"

"Mistral," he echoed. "It is a terrible wind."

I soon made the fact known to our friend that my interest lay in the poet, and inquired whether he knew personally the great singer of the South? No; though he, too, was interested somewhat in his writings.

"In Provence, Mistral is the uncrowned king of the country, a fine old fellow—one of the great men of last century. I can see him now with his wide-awake hat, dog, pipe, and longish, white 'Napoleon.' He is a little like Buffalo Bill in appearance, and, by the way, he has another link with America; Roosevelt is great on Mistral, and a letter of his is in the Museum, founded by the poet, at Arles. That's one more feather in Roosevelt's cap! It astonished and pleased me to know that the prophet and priest of the strenuous life should have found time to discover and acknowledge, in terms of characteristic energy, the famous Provençal. One great man hailing another is a grand sight. And Roosevelt is, take it from me, one of the 'safest' big men in the world, because in building a nation he remembers that he has a soul of his own, and he wants the nation to have one too. No man who does not love literature—not merely know it—can ever be truly called 'great'; he's not wise enough for the title."

An interesting globe-trotter this, possessing ideas and the gift of expressing them. He knew America, India, and Japan, and would fain have spoken of these countries, but I kept him to Provence, hoping for more intimate records of Mistral. The game was worth the candle, for he began to confess, and confession is always interesting.

"I learnt by heart one of the Provençal songs, and, if you like, I'll write down the words—you seem fairly an enthusiast! When I tell you the song is one of Mistral's own you'll be keener than ever." So it came about that he chanted the lines at the end of this article, impressing me with the music of the langue d'Oc as written by the poet. Between us we made the translation quoted.

"I wish you'd tell me what you think of Provence," I urged. My acquaintance was a man of leisure and good-nature, and it was not difficult to persuade him, although he remarked: "That's a large order. For one thing, though, you get none of this wretched fog down there in the Midi. The sun alone makes life worth living." It was good to hear of the sun again, for he had given London the cold shoulder for many weeks, and, outside the restaurant windows, groups of passers-by were dimly discernible in the yellow fog. But our friend liked London, and swore he would never compare her with Provence, to discredit her; not for a thousand places like Provence! Good luck to that globe-trotter. In frank, clear phrase his words banished the sight of the sinister-looking fog;

above us rose a deep blue Midi sky, and about us shone the everlasting sun. The hot sunshine that makes it prudent to shelter from the noon-day heat was with us for a spell, and around stretched the smooth plains of the Crau, the Alpilles rising in the distance. The haughty eyes of Roman grandeur gazed, with chastened regard, upon the classic ruins, where fought of old the Roman hosts among the rocks and gorges. Charlemagne smote Saracen upon these plains and mountains, whose very names are poems, Roque-Martine, Romanin, and Baux; and Maillane, where Mistral himself was born. Of Arles we thought, and of Avignon, the Roman theatre, the arena, and of Roland's tomb beneath the cypress trees on the river bank. We saw the life of the present day, brown arms and faces of gleaners, load on head, wending their way along the white road to Arles. We heard the snail-sellers crying their wares, fresh gathered from the fields—so they said. Out of our friend's past came the memory of cherry brandy in a modest but clean tavern far away. Had he not danced the "farandole" in a merry throng of youth and beauty? I think it was the picture of olive groves in sunlight, farmsteads hidden by poplars, love, and light, and laughter that suddenly caused our friend to feel the "gai-savoir" of the Midi.

"He who talks of wine without drinking is a fool for his pains!" he declared. And who would deny him a parting toast and God-speed on his next "look round this little earth?" He left a brightness in that Soho restaurant, and as he moved among the crowd without I realised more keenly than ever the privileges of the globe-trotter. This one had said little of Mistral; but out of his memory he had called up the atmosphere of the poet's land. All the world knows "Mireille," yet how few are aware of all that Mistral did for the land that gave him birth and inspiration! How he reformed the language, gave life to a new literature, and worked twenty years in the compilation of a Provençal dictionary! But those who have read can never forget the story of the youthful seven: Roumanille, Mistral, Tavan, Aubanel, Giéra, Brunet, and the gay Mathieu holding their council at Font-Ségugne to form the Félibrige Movement in the far-off days of May, 1854. Their oath of devotion to Poetry, Love, and Provence has been fulfilled, and the fame of Frédéric Mistral is the measure of their success, the token and crown of their faith. In the dark days of the Middle Ages, as we know, Provence had her poets, troubadours who sang of valour and chivalry in court and castle of old France. Then came the Renaissance and Malherbe, born in Provence, who became one of the founders of modern French literature. During the centuries the langue d'Oc declined until it came to be a more or less illiterate mode of speech. But the Seven Félibres stood between the past and the future, devoting their lives to the revival of a lost glory and the creation of a greater. Of their most famous member it was good to hear even so little; and here is the globe-trotter's poem:—

FIHO POULIDO
Porto sa verquiero au front.

Uno fiho de champ, pèr tant que fugue pauro,
N'aguènt que si vint ounglo e gardant sus lou piue
Soun troupeloun de fedo à la rigour de l'auro,
S'es bello, pòu agué dins l'astre soun pan kiue.

D'un segnour ufanous, en casso dins li Mauro,
La chato, un bon matin, aura pica dins l'iue:
E lou prince n'en fai sa princesso e sa Lauro,
Coume acò s'encapito i Milo-e-uno-Niue!

Se sabiés gaubeja tout ço que te rènd bello,
Lou riban de toun péu, la flour de ta capello
E lou douz paraulis que t'a messo en relèu,

Prouvenco, ta peréu, sénso argént, sénso armado,
Rèn que pér ta belour, rèn que pér èstre amado,
Estariès pér toujour la réino dòu soulèu.

The translation is as follows. (Mistral, often likened to Burns, expressed a similar spirit, and the language of "Bobbie" is a most suitable medium for conveying the words of the poet of Provence):

A BONNIE MAID

Carries her fortune in her face.

A country maid wha has nae wealth
Save twenty nails a' pink wi' health,
An' tends her sheep on stormy brae;
Gin she be fair,

The brightest star o' heaven may wear.

A mighty laird, perchance, at chase,
Will look into her bonnie face,
And as in mony an ancient lay

He'll tak for bride

Yon lassie o' the mountain-side.

Wi' beauty's arts that rend sae fair,
The flower in bosom, band in hair,
Your accents sweet beyond compare,

Ah, Provence!

Blest wi' naether wealth nor arms,
Nor aught of pow'r but beauty's charms,
Ye'll be for aye the Queen o' the Sun.

I am, Sir, Yours truly, HAROLD BUTTERWORTH.
3, Kensington Park Road, London, W.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND A "MAN OF LETTERS."

To the Editor of THE ACADEMY.

Sir,—It was with feelings of profound amazement that I, as a literary man and journalist, learned that Mr. Robert Ross, literary executor to the late Oscar Wilde, had been made the recipient of a testimonial and present of money from some three hundred more or less distinguished individuals who claim to be counted among his friends or at least his admirers. One would have thought that, in view of the manner in which he has exercised his privileges as executor to the Wilde estate, and especially in view of the evidence given and the comments made by the learned judges in two recent unsuccessful prosecutions in which Mr. Ross was the pursuer, that he is hardly the sort of person to deserve the sympathy, support and eulogy of reasonable people. Therefore I was especially gratified to read the very admirable leading article on the subject which appeared in your esteemed columns on April 10 under the heading, "The Prime Minister and a 'Man of Letters.'" When a man of letters is presented with a laudatory address and a gift of seven hundred pounds one certainly expects that he has done some really big and noble work; but THE ACADEMY shows quite clearly that Mr. Ross's literary performances amount to very little. I claim to have a knowledge of Mr. Ross's "literary work," and it has never seemed to me that he is noted for the so-called "justice and courage of his writings." Let us examine, for example, Mr. Ross's conduct in regard to Wilde's "De Profundis." It is now known that "De Profundis" as a whole, and including the unpublished portions, which are housed in the British Museum, is a discreditable, simpering, utterly insincere and altogether abominable piece of writing, and it is well that we should remember that the unpublished parts, which contain gross, foul and wicked libels upon persons at present living, were handed to the Museum authorities by

Mr. Robert Ross, whom Mr. Asquith and others seek to glorify. These portions of the MS. are not to be published until 1960, by which time the persons libelled in it will have passed away. Why was it not destroyed? The literary executor of Oscar Wilde prefers, in the first place, to publish the holy parts of the MS. about Love and Christ and Sorrow, and, in the second place, to reserve the other portions, which we are told are "not for this generation," for posterity. And posterity, I firmly believe, will judge that a man "long distinguished for the justice and courage of his writings" would not have acted after the manner of Mr. Robert Ross. I have seen so many Wilde prefaces written by Mr. Ross that it is not over-stepping the mark to say that for a good many years past he has been Wilde's chief fugle-man and boomster. For myself, I do not consider that certain works by Wilde are in any way desirable, and if it is necessary to protest against the canonisation of Oscar Wilde, it is just as necessary to protest, in the public interest or at least in the interest of letters, against this extraordinary laudation of Mr. Robert Ross.

When a man of Mr. Ross's literary reputation is given such an amazing testimonial it clearly shows that we live in sad and degenerate times. I note that Mr. Ross has not accepted the £700, but prefers the sum should be devoted to the foundation of a "Robert Ross" scholarship in the Slade School of Fine Art at University College, London. Personally, I would have preferred to have seen the money handed over to one of the war relief funds or given to some of the men of letters who badly need it.

Then, to look at the matter from another point of view, in your issue of April 10 I noted that you asked the Prime Minister, among others, to explain to the literary public upon what grounds it is asserted that Mr. Ross has "long been distinguished for the justice and courage of his writings," but so far he has had nothing to say, and the other gentlemen whom you asked for an explanation are equally silent. If Mr. Ross's reputation is so great it ought not to be difficult for the Prime Minister to give instances of the "justice and courage" of Mr. Ross's writings; but I take it that most of your readers will agree with me that Mr. Asquith, in ignoring your challenge, is practically admitting the impossibility of justifying his action in signing this ridiculous testimonial.

I am, your obedient servant,

W. SORLEY BROWN,

4th King's Own Scottish Borderers.
Galashiels, April 20, 1915.

The City

SHORT loans are in demand, and two months' bills have been readily discounted at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Supplies will probably be augmented to some extent on Saturday, when £15,000,000 of Treasury Bills are paid off, but the extent depends upon the quantity of fresh bills which may be sold by the Government in the interval. Money is coming in to the Exchequer fairly well. Receipts from revenue to the end of last week were £16,485,000 against £11,464,968 for the same period last year, and Exchequer balances show an increase of £12,650,000 against £8,106,321 last year. On the Stock Exchange things have become very dull, apart from a certain improvement in Russian, Japanese, and Chinese stocks and the excitement which had been manufactured in the Copper market. The reaction in copper shares is welcome for the simple reason that so many people outside the professional ranks were getting the fever. There has also been a setback in Steel Commons and Canpacs. The

tendency to speculation has been induced mainly from New York, and the public must be warned not to fall into the trap which will certainly be provided now even more than at ordinary times. Only on Monday we heard loud regrets that certain copper shares had not been bought, and the usual rather desperate suggestion that they should be bought then, high as they were. The "tip" had gone round and the chances are had been taken too late as usual. Rubber shares are still looking up, with Malacca taking an easy lead. Reports now coming out daily make excellent reading for shareholders, who would not have been much surprised if the results of last year's working had meant considerable reduction in dividends. The younger producers all seem to have done well.

How war may bring partial compensation to industrial concerns is reflected in the report of the Kimberley Water Works Company, and the speech of the chairman at Wednesday's meeting. The consumption of the company's water was over 65 million gallons in excess of that of the previous year down to the end of July, 1914. The war involved the shutting down of the mines, with heavy loss naturally to the company. The military camps which sprang up in South Africa almost restored water consumption to normal, and on the whole year there was a shortage on 1913 of only 18,000,000 gallons, though this recovery was unfortunately to some extent discounted by the necessity of reducing charges in order to relieve local conditions. The net result was a working profit of £26,000 for the year and a five per cent. dividend.

The report of the Alliance Assurance Company shows that new life policies were issued for well over a million and a half sterling. The total life premiums received during the year were £1,173,135, and the life and annuity funds at the end of 1914 stood at the fine figure of £18,254,000, the total funds of the company amounting to very little short of £25,000,000. The average rate of interest earned was high at £4 6s. 8d. After paying a dividend of 12s. per share, the amount remaining to be carried forward on profit and loss account is £73,912 in excess of that of the previous year.

The directors of the Royal Exchange Assurance recommend the General Court to be held on the 28th instant to declare a further dividend of 6 per cent., free of income tax, making 10 per cent. for the year 1914.

KIMBERLEY WATER WORKS.

The 35th annual general meeting of the shareholders of the Kimberley Water Works Co., Ltd., was held on Wednesday, Mr. James Jackson, the chairman of the company, presiding.

The secretary (Mr. F. W. Archdeacon) having read the notice convening the meeting, and the auditors' report,

The Chairman said: Gentlemen, we meet to-day under circumstances unparalleled in the history of the world. We are fighting desperately, as were our forefathers a century ago, for our freedom and the very existence of our Empire against a tyranny of organised oppression before which the worst exploits of Napoleon pale.

If the dangers have been, and are still, great in Europe, in South Africa they have been little less so. German money, and German intrigue, encouraged and fostered a rebellion so serious that but for masterful handling the whole of South Africa might have been aflame and have been lost to the Mother Country, which, after the great war in Europe was over, would have had to start and reconquer the country if she could. It is almost impossible to imagine General Botha dealing with the Treaty of Vereenigen as a "Scrap of Paper," or being otherwise than loyal and true to his trust. It was thrice fortunate that he was at the head of affairs, for no one in South

Africa has ever enjoyed the confidence of Boer and Briton alike as he does. He recognised that the situation was desperately critical, and he rose nobly to the occasion.

The evils of the war are so terrible, and the losses it entails to ourselves and others so vast, that it is almost a shame to talk of any of its trifling compensations. As things have fallen out, however, our company has derived some advantage from the establishment of various military camps in and around Kimberley, in which were concentrated large numbers of men, horses and cattle, so that the demand for water materially helped in raising what might have been a meagre consumption of water in the second half of the year to respectable, if not normal, proportions. Mainly owing to the record sales of the months of January and February of nearly 95,000,000 gallons, we were in the fortunate position on the occurrence of the war of starting the second half year with an excess of 65,000,000 gallons over the corresponding period of 1913, which enabled us to end the year with the satisfactory figure of over 282,000,000 gallons, one of the highest yearly sales in the company's record.

I do not suppose in any corner of the Empire has the effect of this calamity been more marked or immediate than at Kimberley, where the prosperity of the community is so largely dependent on the single industry of diamond mining. It was believed that on August 1 a large stock of diamonds remained in the hands of the producers, and it was recognised that there could be no market for such articles of luxury when all the great nations of Europe were convulsed in war, so that the prompt action taken by the De Beers Company was in no way surprising. They closed down the mines at once.

There has been a good deal of adverse criticism on the action of De Beers, but after all they were the best judges of the position. It could serve no useful purpose to hold out false hopes to their employees by making light of the trouble, and they did what they considered necessary to relieve the situation. As a concession to meet the prevailing distress a temporary discount of 25 per cent. on all domestic consumption of water was made by this company on condition of prompt payment, and, for the time, salaries both in Kimberley and on this side have been reduced by 20 per cent., an abatement to which drafters' fees had also been subjected. The extremely gloomy and pessimistic view that was taken on the outbreak of the war on commerce and trade generally, and particularly of the diamond trade—diamonds being practically unsaleable eight months ago—gradually gave place to a much greater feeling of confidence when the fact became patent that the trade of this country, at any rate, far from being extinguished, continued active and in some instances most profitable. Our neutral friends, the Americans, seem to be profiting by the misfortunes that have overwhelmed much of the trade of Europe, and to be making money at a rate that might be expected to satisfy any reasonable ambition. They have also been extensive and prominent buyers of diamonds, and, if report speaks truly, they have even at this early period, after a total abstinence, begun to buy pretty freely. It is from them only that the first demand for diamonds on any large scale can be expected after the war is over. Once peace is restored and things have had time to settle down, there is every reason to confidently look forward to a career of renewed prosperity and welfare for this company, punctuated, perhaps, with the recurrence of the bonuses of the past two years, which, though short-lived, were so very welcome. I now beg to move the adoption of the report. (Applause.)

Mr. Robert Ford seconded the motion, and gave an interesting account of his recent visit to Kimberley. The motion was carried unanimously.

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